

ICPS newsletter

Reform of public administration in Latvia — a useful example for Ukraine

The seminar entitled "Creation of the Institution of State Secretaries in Ukraine: Options and World Experience" held this year at ICPS has shown that Latvia has made significant progress in establishing a clear division between political and administrative activities within its executive government. The director of the State Chancellery of Latvia, Gunta Veismane, took part in the ICPS workshop as a foreign expert. At her suggestion, an official tour to Latvia was conducted last week, with one of the Ukrainian visitors being the Assistant Secretary of the CMU, Ivan Skrypets. The main goal of this tour was to familiarise the Ukrainian delegation with one of mechanisms for coordinating policymaking in Latvia (namely, regular meetings of state secretaries), as well as to discuss the possibility of launching a joint project aimed at supporting the development of the state secretary institution in Ukraine

ICPS continues to expand its foreign relations, in order to use the successful experience of candidates for EU membership in its programs of technical assistance to the government of Ukraine.

The experience of countries undergoing the accession process is useful for Ukraine, not least because they have outpaced Ukraine in reforms. Using their experience, Ukraine has an opportunity to incorporate in its own programs the most successful reforms already realised by those countries, and to avoid their mistakes.

The leadership of Ukraine still has no capacity to work under conditions of clear divisions between the arms of government, an established multi-party system, coherently formed groups of commercial interests, and pluralism in society. The task of adapting public administration to such new conditions faces the following

obstacles (besides the problem of political responsibility of the government):

- There is still no clear and institutionally based division between political and administrative activities within the government;
- The system of strategic planning and horizontal coordination of policymaking is still undeveloped;
- There is still no institutional capacity to manage change, as well as no strategy, programs, or plans of action for the reform of public administration.

Public administration reform in Latvia is conducted according to a detailed plan

The coordination of all public administration reforms in Latvia is a task for the Minister for Special Assignments for State Reforms, who is in charge for policy in this sector.

The Ministry has its own Secretariat, which plays the role of a think tank and coordinates policymaking for the reform of public administration.

The Cabinet of Ministers of Latvia has adopted a strategy document for the second phase of public administration reform in 2001–2006. According to this document, all reforms in Latvia should be conducted under the general framework of the EU integration process. The Copenhagen Criteria require the republic to adopt the *acquis communautaire* (code of legislative acts of the EU) by 1 January 2003. As far as public administration is concerned, Latvia must establish an effective, stable, and equitable civil service that is guided by the rule of law and capable of implementing the *acquis*.

Taking into account the requirements of EU accession, Latvia has singled out the following objectives for the reform of its civil service:

- To establish policymaking coordination mechanisms;
- To adopt a law on the civil service designed according to European standards;
- To reform the system of civil servants' wages;
- To develop a new system of government procurement in order to ensure adequate supervision and decrease the level of corruption.

The Secretariat has already worked out a program for the implementation of the reform strategy, and a detailed plan of actions for the next five years. These documents are to be considered by the government in the near future.

Meetings of state secretaries in Latvia are assigned more functions

The institution of state secretaries in Latvia was established in 1993. The duties of state secretaries are determined by the framework law on the civil service. State secretaries are responsible for medium-term programs and the budget process.

The government adopts strategy, and state secretaries work out programs for its implementation. In preparing such programs, state secretaries must identify

Objectives stated in the Strategy for the reform of public administration in Latvia

*To proceed from short-term planning
From reacting on consequences
From unclear decision making and the division of responsibilities into central and executive levels
From concentrating on processes and enforcement procedures
From following the requirements of bureaucracy
From traditional planning of resource usage that takes into account only their availability*

*To medium-term planning;
To strategic governance;
To clearly defined coordinating functions of central authorities (in the design of standard and legal documents) and to broader functions of executive bodies;
To concentrating on results;
To customer-oriented public administration;
To planning the usage of resources taking into account the expected results.*

criteria for evaluating the effectiveness of the programs, to clearly formulate the expected outcomes of the programs, and to coordinate them with the state budget.

Since 1994, regular meetings of state secretaries are held each Thursday, under the supervision of the Director of the State Chancellery. These meetings function as a mechanism for coordinating the policymaking process. Participants of the meetings include the state secretaries of all ministries, the Deputy Director of the State Chancellery for Legal Issues, and representatives of the Office of the Public Prosecutor, the Bureau for European Integration, and the Council for Local Government.

Usually the meetings consist of two parts. During the first, official part the state secretaries consider the drafts of standard acts that should be presented to the Committee of the Cabinet of Ministers, and have the opportunity to formulate their own considerations. The second part of the meeting takes the form of a discussion on various questions.

After being considered at a meeting of state secretaries, drafts are submitted for consideration by the Committee of the Cabinet of Ministers. When any issues of drafts are considered contradictory, they are submitted for consideration at interministerial meetings before their consideration by the Cabinet of Ministers. The most important policy issues for consideration by the Cabinet of Ministers are discussed at the Coalition Council, which includes representatives of political parties that form the Government.

Functions of the meetings of state secretaries, and the role played by them within the system of governmental decision making, have been determined by the Regulations on the Cabinet of Ministers. Now, the government of Latvia is considering a new edition of the Regulations. The new revision gives the meetings of state secretaries broader functions, thanks to the transfer of non-political functions from the Committee of the Cabinet of Ministers to the state secretaries. It is expected that this transfer will clarify the division between the political and administrative functions of the executive government, thus increasing the effectiveness of cabinet decision making.

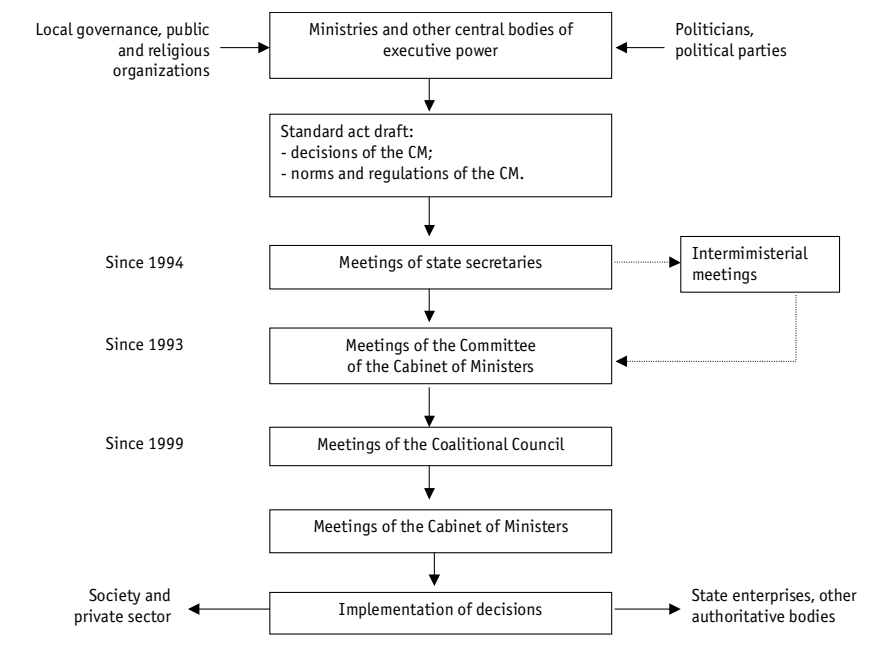
Twinning is a vehicle to effectively adopt the experience of Latvia

We believe that one of the most effective ways for Ukraine to adopt the experience of EU candidate countries (not only Latvia) is to include its civil servants in programs of bilateral cooperation—so-called quasi-twinning. The programs can be conducted as

Functions of the Policy Coordination Department of the State Chancellery of Latvia

- To coordinate the design of proposals for the objectives and priorities of public policy and on the development of the state.
- To develop and coordinate a system of working out the strategy for state development and to identify the criteria for evaluating its implementation.
- To coordinate the design, renovation, and implementation of interministerial plans of action according to the Governmental declaration on the activity of the Cabinet of Ministers.
- To evaluate and provide (when necessary) expert assistance (as far as policy coordination is concerned) in drafting standard acts before they are submitted for consideration by the Cabinet of Ministers and by the Prime Minister.
- To review the functions of state authorities in policymaking and policy implementation, and to provide recommendations on how to make them more effective.
- To establish cooperation with other national and international organisations functioning in the same or relevant spheres.
- To analyse, upon the instructions of the Prime Minister, certain intersectoral issues and to propose different ways to solve the identified problems.

Decision-making in Latvia



models of the real twinning programs that function as a key mechanism of providing CEE countries with technical assistance.

Twinning programs have a great advantage over sporadic training tours and meetings (such as workshops), which do not implement a unified systematic approach. The first advantage is that twinning programs are designed according to the real needs of the government. The second is that these programs are oriented on concrete results. The activities of the twinning are organized as ongoing cooperation between institutions and governmental officials from two countries. One of the principal outcomes of the twinning should be jointly developed institutional documents.

It would be very useful for Ukraine to establish cooperation between the Secretariat of the Cabinet of Ministers of Ukraine and the Policy Coordination Department of the State Chancellery of Latvia. The Department has already worked out a methodology for strategic planning for the Government of Latvia and is working on detailed methodological recommendations on how to implement it. ■

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